

KEEPING THE LINES OF COMMUNICATION OPEN

It's important to keep the lines of communication open. Organizations need to have systems in place to maintain good, open communication. Often there are consequences when breakdowns in communication occur, and nature is a good example of this. When electricity freely flows, it provides us the necessary power we need in our daily lives. When the flow of electricity stops, we are not able to continue with our normal functions. If there is a sudden surge or break in an electrical line, it may cause a fire or even a disaster.

Open communication assists in prompt identification and response to concerns. The Federal Sentencing Guidelines (FSG) for Effective Compliance and Ethics Programs advises organizations to develop a Compliance hotline to help create a culture that encourages workforce members to report concerns that may violate laws and regulations. The FSG says it this way: "The organization shall take reasonable steps to have and publicize a system, which may include mechanisms that allow for anonymity or confidentiality, whereby the organization's employees and agents may report or seek guidance regarding potential or actual criminal conduct without fear of retaliation." Having and publicizing a Compliance hotline is one of the elements of an effective compliance and ethics program.

Fear of retaliation or a hostile work environment is most often the reason that concerns are not reported, and this is how communication can begin to breakdown. It's important to know that for this very reason Compliance hotlines are managed by the Compliance, Privacy, and Audit Services Bureau (CPAS) and Auditor Controller. The goal is to help maintain workforce confidentiality and/or anonymity, to assist in prompt response, and have impartial oversight of reported concerns. The hotlines provide a safe way for workforce members to promptly report concerns and help maintain open lines of communication.

Often, concerns reported through the Compliance hotlines are not violations of laws and regulations. Regardless of the type of concern reported, the CPAS and Auditor Controller oversee all the responses to the concerns reported through the Compliance hotlines. Although the CPAS does not conduct all the investigations, they have an obligation to assess and determine whether there was an adequate assessment and response to the concern.

We all need to do our part to keep the lines of communication open by promptly reporting and responding to concerns to maintain compliance, so we all can enjoy working in an ethical culture.

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Auditor Controller Email: Hotline@auditor.lacounty.gov

Auditor Controller Hotline: 800-544-6861